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RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3861  
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 0044  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2017  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BO](#)  
SUBJECT: BELARUSIAN KGB ATTACKS MALADY FRONT

REF: A. MINSK 152

- [1](#)B. 06 MINSK 1166
- [1](#)C. MINSK 218
- [1](#)D. MINSK 221

Classified By: DCM Jonathan Moore for reason 1.4 (d).

#### Summary

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Belarusian security services in the last few days have interrogated dozens of activists from the youth organization Malady Front (MF) and threatened many with criminal charges. Human rights lawyers and journalists fear that many MF activists could face extended jail time. All who have spoken to us agree that the GOB,s actions are scare tactics to frighten organizers and would-be youth participants of the March 25 opposition demonstration. End summary.

#### The MF Roundup Begins

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[1](#)2. (U) The Belarusian KGB (BKGB) has recently unleashed a strong and systematic harassment campaign throughout Belarus against members of the pro-democracy youth group Malady Front (MF). In Zhlobin (Gomel oblast), the BKGB on March 12 interrogated former MF activist and member of the Belarusian National Front (BNF) Eduard Zelyankov for four hours about his participation in MF. On March 13, the BKGB questioned 17-year-old Kiryl Atamanchyk about his attendance at the February 4 MF conference in Minsk, at which the authorities detained 27 participants, including MF leaders Dmitriy Fedaruk and Aleh Korban, who are currently being charged with running an unregistered organization. On March 14, the BKGB pulled 17-year-old MF activists Andrey Sarachynskiy and Katsyarina Koneva from their high school classrooms for similar questioning and searched regional MF secretary Boris Goretskiy,s apartment after searching his mother's residence earlier that day.

[1](#)3. (U) In Vitebsk, the BKGB on March 13 interrogated three high school students and two college students about their participation in MF activities. High school student Elena Bogdanova told independent online news source BelaPAN that BKGB investigator Yevginiy Yurchenko tried to take her from her classroom against the principal,s wishes. MF activists Vladislav Chernik, Kristina Mikhailova, Yuliya Matusyevich, and Andrey Danilyevskiy were also interrogated. Human rights defender Valeriy Shukin told BelaPAN reporters that the BKGB asked questions relating to MF membership dues, MF members and partners, and why the youth had the Vitebsk MF headquarters' number programmed in their mobile phones.

¶4. (U) On March 12, Minsk prosecutors informed MF activists Aleksey Yanushewski and 17-year-old Anastasiya Palazhanko, who presented a Valentine's Day card to the DCM as part of a February 14 MF event (ref A), that they were now suspects in the Fedaruk-Korban criminal investigation. On March 14, prosecutors also named youth activist Boris Haretskiy as a suspect after searching his and his parents' apartments.

Nothing But Scare Tactics?  
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¶5. (C) Lawyer for the human rights NGO &Vyasna8 Valentin Stefanovich on March 14 expressed to DCM and Poloff concern for the recent wave of BKGB harassment toward MF activists. Stefanovich said authorities were setting a precedent by naming minors as suspects in criminal cases and feared that others, such as the Zhlobin MF secretary Goretskiy, could end up with lengthy jail sentences similar to MF leader Dmitry Dashkevich, who is serving 18 months for running an unregistered organization (ref B).

¶6. (C) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Lyubov Lunyova claimed to DCM that the latest harassment was the authorities, attempts to disrupt preparations for the March 25 opposition demonstration. According to Lunyova, the authorities, goal was not to scare MF activists, who tend to be unbending in the face of security service threats, but to frighten other youth who were debating amongst themselves whether to participate in the March 25 event. Dashkevich,s lawyer and representative for other MF activists Aleksandr Galiyev on March 16 echoed Stefanovich,s and Lunyova,s assessments, noting that he would likely not represent the other MF activists because of increased pressure on him from the authorities.

Comment  
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¶7. (C) We too view the latest harassment of MF activists as one of the many measures -- including the arrests of opposition leaders Vintsuk Vyachorka and Vyacheslav Sivchik (refs C and D) -- the GOB is taking to hinder the March 25 demonstration. Organizers of the March 25 demonstration told us on March 16 that in view of the recent crackdown, they do not expect a significant number of Belarusians to show up (septel). Meanwhile, the GOB has been busy trying to convince the EU, the USG, and its own citizens that Belarus shares European values of democracy and is committed to constructive dialogue with the West.  
Stewart